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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year

1957



PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical Officer for North Herts. Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Office,  
12 Brand Street, Hitchin  
(Telephone: Hitchin 3757)

Senior Public Health Inspector and Cleansing Superintendent:

WILLIAM M. MATHEWS, Certs. Joint Board,  
Meat and Foods,  
San. Science,  
Smoke Inspection.

Additional Inspectors:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Certs. Joint Board,  
Testamur of Inst. of Public Cleansing.

LEONARD G. STRIBLEY, Certs. Joint Board,  
Meat and Foods.

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Wm. E. Potter, Clerk to the Council,  
Council Offices,  
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15 High Street, Hitchin  
(Telephone: Hitchin 2827)

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To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the direction of the Ministry of Health Circular 1/58 I present an annual report on the health and sanitary condition of your district for the year 1957.

In view of the age composition of the population the local death rate of 9.3 is again very favourable (standardised rate 9.1). This exceptionally low local death rate confirms that the widespread pandemic of Asian influenza affected the younger, and not the older, age groups of the population. The live birth rate of 16.1 coincides with the national rate (16.1). While the still-birth rate for the year was just above the national rate, the infant mortality figure of 19.6 fell below the record low national rate of 23.0.

The local incidence of serious infectious disease was again low and easing of the pressure for housing of families allows your authority to increase efforts for the solution of the problem of disrepair of older properties.

I would again acknowledge having received from your chief officers every consideration and help during the year. In the compilation of the report I would acknowledge the help of your Senior Public Health Inspector, Mr. W. M. Mathews, who is wholly responsible for the sections touching upon sanitary environment.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your obedient servant,

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

June 1958



SECTION ALOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	.....	81,324
Home Population - Registrar-General's estimate for	.....	
	mid-1957	22,250
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1958 (estd.)	..	7,358
Rateable Value - 1st April 1958	.....	£173,247
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1958/9)	....	£696

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1957

<u>LIVE BIRTHS</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT</u>	<u>Comparable Rate for England and Wales</u>
(Legitimate	346	160	186		
(Illegitimate	11	4	7		
(All	357	164	193		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	...	...	16.1	16.1
<u>STILL BIRTHS</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
(Legitimate	8	6	2		
(Illegitimate	1	-	1		
(All	9	6	3		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births..				24.6	22.4
<u>DEATHS</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
	207	98	109		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	...	...	9.3	11.5
<u>DEATH RATE OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE</u>					
All infants per 1,000 live births	...	...		19.6	23.0
Rate for legit. infants per 1,000 legitimate births		17.3			
Rate for illegit. infants per 1,000 illegitimate births		90.9			
Actual number of such deaths					
(a) under 4 weeks and (b) <u>at all ages</u> <u>under 1 year</u>					
Legitimate	...	4		6	
Illegitimate	...	1		1	
		5		7	



3.

Deaths from pregnancy, childbirth or abortion ...	...	...	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites) ...	...	...	34
Deaths from Measles ...	...	...	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough ...	...	...	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases ...	...	...	-

#### Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimated local mid-year population again shows a slight increase (30).

Total live births numbered 357 against 347 in 1956, and total deaths 207 against 229.

#### Principal causes of Death

Of the total of 207 deaths, 76 were attributed to Heart and other Circulatory Diseases, 35 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System, 34 to Cancer (all sites) and 17 to Respiratory Diseases.

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### SECTION B

#### General Provision of Health Services

No important change occurred during the year.

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### SECTION C

#### Staff

There were no changes in the inspectorial staff during the year. On the clerical side, Mrs. B. Waller left in early July and her place was taken by Mrs. A. Johnson at the end of the same month. Duties have again been performed with conscientious interest although this year two inspectors have not enjoyed the best of health.

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#### Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

##### Water Supplies

The water consumption throughout the year has continued to rise and reached a peak at the beginning of June, when the consumption for one day was 860,000 gallons as against an average day of 550,000 gallons, showing an increase of about 56 per cent. Early in the year difficulties were being experienced at King's Walden

and alterations were carried out to enable both borehole pumps to be used simultaneously. This meant, of course, that there was no stand-by pump but it enabled us to avoid shortages in the Offley area. Difficulties were also experienced in Codicote. Fully automatic starting equipment was ordered, delivery being promised for February 1958. Weston village also experienced shortages of water during the summer and as an emergency measure it was necessary to hire a portable pump and connect this into the mains at Clothall to augment the supply. A scheme for additional mains and the construction of a booster station at Wallington was prepared and sent to the Ministry and it is hoped that this will be completed and in use before the summer of 1958.

An Inquiry was also held during the year in respect of the proposed borehole near Fulling Mill in the Parish of Codicote, for the Welwyn Garden City U.D.C. and the result of this is still awaited. The report of the Minister's Inspector regarding water supplies in Hertfordshire has still not been published and it is difficult to understand why there has been this continued delay.

Two tables of analysis are submitted:-

1. Taken by the Council's Engineer and Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.
2. Taken by the Surveyor and the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table 1

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	4	4	-	-	-
Codicote	4	4	-	-	-
King's Walden	10	6	-	4	-
Wymondley	4	4	-	-	-
Braughing	No records - under control of Braughing R.D.C.				
Totals	22	18	-	4	-

5.

Table 2

1. <u>Council Undertakings</u>	<u>No. taken</u>	<u>Satis- factory</u>	<u>Unsatis- factory</u>	<u>Doubtful</u>
Kings Walden/Offley	4	4	-	-
Pirton	4	4	-	-
Hitchin/Braughing	6	6	-	-
Codicote	3	3	-	-
Wymondley	1	1	-	-
2. <u>Bulk Supplies</u>				
Letchworth U.D. (Radwell)	4	-	4 <sup>x</sup>	-
Baldock U.D. (Bygrave)	1	1	-	-
Hitchin U.D. (Ickleford)	5	5	-	-
3. <u>Other Sources</u>				
Special samples (private supplies)	44	20	23	1
	72	44	27	1

x End of new main - not in use at time of sampling.

### Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

Unfortunately it has been possible to make little progress in the provision of sewerage and sewage treatment plants in the various villages due to the present high cost of works and interest rates. Whitwell sewerage scheme was completed during the year and it is anticipated that an Inquiry will be held in the near future with regard to the village of Ickleford, which does of course, depend on the extension of the U.D.C. works. A sewerage and sewage disposal scheme has been prepared for the village of Hexton, but at the present time it is held in abeyance. The position at Kimpton is very serious indeed, as was reported last year, and it is hoped that the scheme, which in this case is being prepared by the Consulting Engineers, will be ready early in 1958.



Public Cleansing ServiceRefuse Collection and Disposal

The regular difficulties of recruitment continued to exist throughout the year and gave rise to particular problems on refuse disposal sites. Often, the control of tips had to be sacrificed to provide labour for collection duties and to prevent the creation of arrears. Thus, in September, the Public Health Sub-Committee sat to consider the tips position. Special measures were decided upon to relieve the back-log of tip work and although the weather foiled some of the effort, an appreciable improvement had resulted by the end of the year and much heavier spending on mechanical aids is anticipated in the 1958/9 budget.

A further cause for concern is the shrinking tipping space of the area, and this was referred to the Members for some private thought on the occasion of the Council's tour of the district. Without doubt, this topic will require some careful consideration in the future.

The permitted despatches of salvage to Thames Board Mills remained about the same as in 1956 but the actual amounts sent show a decline due to inadequate labour on the baling side.

Some figures indicating the work done are given below:-

Refuse Collected

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Loads</u>	<u>Approx. weight of all materials collected</u>	<u>Vehicle mileage</u> (inc. foreman's van)
1952	1822	3330 tons	47,314
1953	1947	3731 "	51,579
1954	2012	4398 "	48,758
1955	2012	3996 "	48,862
1956	1987	3859 "	50,327
1957	2175	4196 "	51,097

SalvageYear

1952	-	35	tons collected and sold,-	£346.13. 1d.
1953	-	22	" " " " -	£119.17. 1d.
1954	-	92	" " " " -	£627.11. 4d.
1955	-	140	" " " " -	£1130. 4. 4d.
1956	-	127	" " " " -	£991. 5. 5d.
1957	-	86	" " " " -	£663. 9. 8d.

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### Cesspool Emptying and Night-soil Collection

The cesspool service was continued on the usual basis of one free emptying per financial year, plus chargeable service when required in the same period. Both vehicles were kept busy throughout the year and again there was little "standing down" time.

The limited weekly pail collection was also maintained to those properties where the disposal land was insufficient or occupiers were incapacitated.

The following figures summarise the work performed:-

Year	Number of Emptyings				Loads from Sew- age Works	Pails emptied
	Houses in Private ownership		Council Houses			
	Free	Chargeable	Free	Chargeable		
1952						
(Pet.veh.)	315	169	10	31	466	2947
(Dies.veh.)	156	86	18	30	262	1347
1953						
(Pet.veh.)	196	102	7	29	233	1812
(Dies.veh.)	343	186	20	122	314	2533
1954						
(Pet.veh.)	251	120	5	42	182	1934
(Dies.veh.)	313	168	21	139	450	2746
1955						
(Pet.veh.)	283	116	6	48	214	1850
(Dies.veh.)	375	177	16	72	507	3333
1956						
(Pet.veh.)	336	144	7	61	275	2724
(Dies.veh.)	352	156	18	56	404	2858
1957						
(Pet.veh.)	367	180	7	39	315	2530
(Dies.veh.)	425	193	15	48	426	2703

### Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

Warfarin still proves to be a satisfactory general bait-poison and it is only necessary occasionally to revert to the older type poisons (arsenic, zinc phosphide etc.). Some inconvenience has been caused by the absence of the rodent operator from work due to illness, but otherwise the Joint Scheme has worked satisfactorily.

Details of the work done appear on the next page.

HITCHIN & WELWYN RURAL AND ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS  
JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

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SUMMARY

JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1957

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED						TOTAL
	SEWERS	TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUS. PREMS.	BLOCK INSP.	INSP. OF AGRIC. LAND	
HITCHIN R.D.C.	126	677	288 $\frac{1}{2}$	47 $\frac{1}{2}$	11	51 $\frac{1}{4}$	1201
WELWYN R.D.C.	-	111 $\frac{1}{4}$	78 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{1}{2}$	-	-	218 $\frac{1}{2}$
ROYSTON U.D.C.	47 $\frac{1}{2}$	109	43	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	-	-	201 $\frac{1}{2}$
	173 $\frac{1}{4}$	897 $\frac{1}{4}$	410	78 $\frac{1}{2}$	11	51 $\frac{1}{4}$	1621
Other figures -							187 $\frac{1}{2}$
Total mileage covered - Petrol used - Approx. M.P.G.							1808 $\frac{1}{2}$
TUR 871  6604 163 40.5							
Time spent on vehicle maint., receiving instructions, reports on visits, bait handling etc.  Total hours worked							



Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The following summary gives details of visits made and inspections performed. The use of Statutory procedure continues to be kept to the essential minimum. The number of visits and inspections for all purposes was 3683, detailed as follows in comparison with the year 1956:-

<u>General Sanitation etc.</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>
Water supply .....	98	93
Drainage .....	277	402
Cowsheds, Stables and Piggeries .....	6	4
Ponds and Ditches ..	19	8
Tents, Vans and Sheds (including Caravans) ..	165	211
Factories, Workplaces and Outworkers .....	29	29
Bakchouses .....	4	7
Places of Entertainment (Village Halls etc.) .....	25	23
Licensed Premises ..	19	28
Refuse Collection and Disposal (inc. Salvage) .....	450	298
Rodent Control .....	54	23
Atmospheric Pollution .....	1	3
Schools ..	8	4
Shops .....	58	37
Petroleum Regulations .....	101	158
National Assistance Act .....	9	1
Miscellaneous Visits .....	57	59
<u>Housing</u>		
Public Health Act - visits paid .....	496	691
Housing Acts - " " .....	610	1033
Filthy or Verminous Premises - visits paid ..	4	13
Miscellaneous Visits .....	24	24
<u>Infectious Diseases etc.</u>		
Enquiries in cases of Infectious Disease ...	7	16
Visits re disinfection .....	5	3
" " Food poisoning ...	1	-
<u>Meat and Food Inspection (inc. inspection of premises)</u>		
Slaughterhouses ...	560	413
Butchers ...	21	16
Dairies and Milk Distributors .....	5	22
Fishmongers and Poulterers ..	1	-
Food Preparing premises .....	-	5
Grocers .....	25	30
Greengrocers .....	5	3
Ice-Cream premises ..	31	7
Restaurants .....	7	5
Food Sampling .....	-	1
Miscellaneous Food visits ..	6	13
	<u>3188</u>	<u>3683</u>



SECTION DHousing

On the 31st December 1957, the number of applications on the Council's waiting list for accommodation was 539, an increase of 26 over the previous year.

During 1957, 129 new applications were registered and 103 were deleted from the lists. Sixty-two applicants were re-housed and 41 applications were cancelled, either at the applicant's request or because of the failure of applicants to re-register and to reply to enquiries as to whether they still needed accommodation.

The Council have pursued and intensified their policy of transferring families from one type of house to another of more suitable size. Elderly couples and people living alone in three-bedroom houses have been re-housed in bungalows, thus making available these houses for larger families.

The number of properties for which Improvement Grants were approved during the year was 66 making a total of 310 properties since the inception of the scheme.

The following figures give the number of new dwellings completed during the year:-

No. of new permanent dwellings completed by the Council .....	34
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No. of new permanent dwellings completed by private enterprise (including one Police house built by the Herts. County Council) .....	97
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131
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A great deal of time has been spent in investigations of the condition of the poorer type properties to ascertain whether they were capable of repair or should be considered for possible demolition action. The parishes to which special attention was given were Offley, Lilley and the Codicote area. During the year 48 persons, representing 21 families and coming from 25 slum clearance properties have been re-housed by the Council.

11.

## Caravans

The total number of vans remains fairly constant, there being 139 in 1956 and 141 in 1957. About 85 of this number are on well organised sites. Contrary to the experience in many Council districts, the occupiers have not caused any serious trouble to the Officers up to the present. A good deal of care and patient explanation is undertaken at licensing and re-licensing time and this may be a contributory factor in achieving this result.

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## SECTION E

### Food

#### (a) Inspection of Meat and Other Foods

The apparent inability of the butchers to carry out their slaughtering during the day has again meant that much of the meat inspection has had to be performed at night-time. All food animals killed in the Council's area are inspected. A rota system is operated under which the duty Inspector works until the job is done. Then, as practicable, compensatory time off is given on another occasion.

The year was notable for the fact that slaughterhouse standards of construction and the prevention of cruelty have occupied a fair amount of Parliamentary time. A Slaughterhouses Bill has been prepared and several times the Council has given its views upon the measures of control that are deemed to be necessary to secure proper meat inspection at reasonable hours.

The difficulty of 1956, when a slaughterhouse in the Council's area was taken over for large scale export to London, has not recurred. It should be reported however, that there has been one "near miss" under this heading, and it was only after consideration of all the many factors involved, that the project was finally abandoned.

Information resulting from meat inspection appears on the next page.

## Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part

	Cattle Excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed	392	19	16	1881	222	-
Number inspected	392	19	16	1881	222	-
<u>All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci</u>						
Whole carcasses condemned	-	1	1	-	1	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	17	-	-	1	3	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with dis- ease other than Tuber. and Cyst.	4.3	5.3	6.3	.05	1.8	-
<u>Tuberculosis only</u>						
Whole carcasses condemned	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	7	-	-	-	1	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis	1.8	-	-	-	.5	-
<u>Cysticercosis</u>						
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	1	-	-	-	-	-
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration	-	-	-	-	-	-
Generalised and totally condemned	-	-	-	-	-	-



13.

Some information regarding food premises in the district is given below:-

<u>Type of Business</u>	<u>No. in district</u>
Grocers and Confectioners .....	84
Butchers (inc. cooked meats) .	15
Bakers .....	11
Fishmongers (wet fish) .....	3
Fried fish shops .....	2
Fruiterers, Greengrocers and Confectioners .....	6
Confectioners .....	4
Cafes, Restaurants and Catering establishments ....	18
Public Houses .....	87
Off-licence .....	6
Brewers and Manufacturers of Mineral Waters .....	2
Dairies (producer/retailers) .	3
Other prems. from which milk is sold .....	8
Egg Packing Station .....	1

There are no premises in the district registered under the Food and Drugs Act 1955 for the manufacture of ice-cream, but there are 68 establishments that are covered for the sale thereof. Under the heading of the "Preparation or Manufacture of Preserved Foods etc.", 36 premises are registered of which 9 are not now in active use. The number of dairies registered under the Milk and Dairies Regulations 1949-54 is 3. There were approximately 50 inspections of registered food premises during the year.

The work of inspection and recommendation under the Food Hygiene Regulations 1955/6 continues. The work is slow, as not much time can be devoted to this type of duty. However, significant results are now beginning to show, following the extensive food premises survey that was performed several years ago. Consultations on matters of food handling now frequently precede the submission of plans for food shops, but there is still need for a careful supervision to be kept upon this kind of work.

Inspection of general foodstuffs continues to ascertain their fitness for human consumption. The weight of foods condemned was:-



	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Cwts.</u>	<u>Qtrs.</u>	<u>Lbs.</u>	<u>Ozs.</u>
Tinned Food .....	-	1	-	10	4
Pork .....	-	-	3	3	-
Mutton .....	-	-	-	1	-
Beef .....	-	11	1	18	-
Veal .....	-	-	2	14	-
Misc. Food (cereals, pickles, sweets etc.)	-	1	-	22	4
	-	15	-	12	8

Disposal of organic materials is usually achieved by despatching to a fertiliser processing plant. Tinned goods are normally sent to the Council's refuse tips.

(b) Milk

During the year, 18 Dealer's Licences were issued in respect of the sale of Designated milks from 10 premises in the district, and 25 Supplementary Licences were granted to 14 firms retailing Designated milks in the district from premises situated elsewhere.

(c) Food Poisoning

As stated in Section F of this report, there were two confirmed cases of food poisoning in the district during the year.

(d) Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

An abstract from the report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572 is given herewith:-

15.

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health  
(including inspections made by Public Health Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Reg- ister	Number of -		
		Inspec- tions	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs. 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	14	-	-	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority.	92	18	-	-
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl. Outworkers' prems.)	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	107	18	-	-

2. Cases in which defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found				No. of Prosec- utions
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	
Want of cleanliness	2	1	--	-	-
Overcrowding	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temp.	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary conveniences					
(a) Insufficient	2	1	-	1	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	-	-	-	-	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL .....	4	2	-	1	-

Outworkers. There are 38 Outworkers reported in the district.

SECTION FPrevalence of, and control over, Infectious and other Diseases

For the year 1957 total notifications of acute infectious diseases (after correction) were: Measles 226; Whooping Cough 53; Scarlet Fever 15; Acute Pneumonia 9; Acute Poliomyelitis (Paralytic) 2; Food Poisoning 2, Erysipelas 4; Paratyphoid Fever 1; Puerperal Pyrexia 1; Ophthalmia Neonatorum 1; and Infective Hepatitis 1.

Measles and Whooping Cough were most prevalent in the first quarter.

Scarlet fever was scattered in incidence throughout the wide district, with quarterly incidence 3, 4, 1 and 7. It showed a localised outbreak in the Barkway district in the last month of the year.

The two sporadic cases of acute poliomyelitis occurred one in Graveley and one in Barley, the infection in each case being connected with an outbreak in an adjacent urban area.

The two cases of Food poisoning (organism *Salmonella typhi-murium*), occurring in one family, were presumably due to ham sandwiches warmed during a long car journey. The one case of Paratyphoid fever had its source in the Iberian Peninsula during holiday residence.

Diphtheria was again absent for another year. Nevertheless the offer of immunisation against this formerly dreaded disease continues to be accepted by a good proportion of parents. The offer of vaccination against Whooping Cough for children under 2 years also continues to be widely accepted.

TUBERCULOSISNew Cases and Deaths during the year 1957

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	2	1(3)	-	1	-	-	-	-
35 - 45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	4	-(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
65 and over	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Not known	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	8(2)	1(4)	1	1	-	-	-	-
Deaths allocated by the Registrar-General after final transfers					-	-	-	-

Footnote. In addition to the new cases first notified within the district, there is shown in brackets additional figures of cases transferred to the local register from other areas.

Comment: New notifications of respiratory tuberculosis in the local population are seen to number 9 (8 males, half over 45 years, and 1 female) against 11 for the previous year.  
No death from any form of tuberculosis occurred in the district during the year.

V. R. WALKER

June 1958

District Medical Officer of Health